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ON THE COMMON CHORDS.

“The C Major of this life.”

BROWNING. *Abt Vogler.*

ON THE COMMON CHORDS

VERSES

BY

CLIFFORD HARRISON

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Dedication.

TO MY MOTHER.

TEN years have passed since to Your hands I brought
The book¹ I dedicated unto You,
And now,—as then,—I write, “in filial thought,”
The dear inscription on this page anew.

For though You now have passed away from us
The foretime Dedication still holds good ;
Nay—gains a new authority : and thus,
In unseen ways more felt than understood,

Your smile rests on the pages that I bring
To add to those I brought to You erewhile.
And life has few beliefs more gladdening
Than that I still may gain that unseen smile.

¹ “In Hours of Leisure.”

I think with no sad memory or regret,
No aching sense of loss unsatisfied,
Upon Your love, but rather find it set,
Shining and living, at my very side.

Surely in nought is it more truly felt
Than when I'm happy in my work or play :
And if at times the love in tears will melt,
The tears by love are also wiped away.

I never writ a line You did not see.
Why should I doubt You see what now I write ?
Across the silence comes Your smile to me.
The Dedication gains a brighter light.

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“THE SONG THAT HAS NO SOUND.”

“This music of the Song without a sound.”

Sir EDWIN ARNOLD, “With Sadi in the Garden.”

GRIEVE not that Beauty dies like summer flowers ;
That bright thoughts come and go like fleeting showers :
They do but wander through this life of ours
To tell us of “the Song that has no Sound.”

Out of that song they come—all lovely things,—
Beauty, joy, music, brave imaginings,
And then pass back again with tired wings
Into their Home—“the Song that has no Sound.”

They find a moment's speech in this our air,
As Heat and Light evolve, to make Earth fair,
And having touched our souls, they pass to where
They join again “the Song that has no Sound.”

Say not to Earth—"Why are you silent thus?"
 Nor to the sky—"You give no sign to us!"
 For both do speak with voice miraculous,
 If once you hear "the Song that has no Sound."

The rainbow hanging in the fringe of rain,
 The fields that clothe themselves with golden grain,
 The trees that in the springtime bud again,
 Are music from "the Song that has no Sound."

The waters from the seas and streams updrawn,
 That fall again at sunset and at dawn
 In dew and rain to feed the flower and lawn,
 They also sing "the Song that has no Sound."

See how all colours lose themselves in Light;
 They still are there though they have fled our sight.
 So Music at a point from us takes flight
 Into the perfect "Song that has no Sound."

Oh, love of lovers, and all love that lies
 'Twixt souls that on the flame of love arise,
 What are ye but the far-off melodies
 That reach us from "the Song that has no Sound"?

The noble deed, wrought often all unknown,—
The suffering borne without complaint or moan,—
The rash word checked,—the little kindness shown,—
Are harpstrings to "the Song that has no Sound."

No thought we feel, yet cannot quite express,—
No momentary wish or willingness
To make joy purer, or one pain the less,—
But carries on "the Song that has no Sound."

Glory of morning that has just begun,—
Pathos of eventide and set of sun,—
Major and Minor,—all are fused in one,
For keynote to "the Song that has no Sound."

The calm acceptance of a lowly lot,—
The greatness that this great world values not,—
The causes lost—the victories forgot,—
Are rich chords in "the Song that has no Sound."

The Life that first climbed up from where it fell,—
The Discord solved,—the curse changed to a spell,—
Passion transfigured,—these things go to swell
The triumph of "the Song that has no Sound."

From star-worlds to the stone upon the ground,
From where Life issues, back to where 'tis crowned,
For him who has the ears to hear, is found
The Secret of "the Song that has no Sound."

A PRAYER.

O ! MOUNTAINS, give me of your strength.
Above the clouds ye rise
A huge impact of Titan force.
I look on you. My eyes
Draw in strong Thought. That Thought
In Action realise.

O ! Beauty of the sunlit day,
Tell me your message true :
Let your bright ether o'er me flow,
And wash me through and through ;
Infuse your meanings into me
And make me one with you.

O ! Miracle of Nature, wrought
All round us every day,
Touch me with wonder more and more :
To darkness bring the ray
Whereby to read the open Book
And find the secret way.

O ! stars unseen, but ever *there*,
Grant your beneficence :
Let me lie open to all rays
Of upward influence,
Nor fret myself with questioning
How they may come or whence.

O ! fair and most dear Memories,
Make Past and Future one
In all that raises Life to Love :
And oh ! ye eyes that shone
With such undying love on me
Still lead me up and on.

O ! Ache of heart unsatisfied,
Give me no lower rest
Than That the dim mind apprehends
As Highest and as Best :
Live like a searching melody
Within me—unexpressed.

O ! shining Footsteps of the Christ,
Too often hid in gloom,
Shine out and blossom in the dust :
Life's mysteries illumine,
And guide me on—a path of Light—
In worlds beyond the tomb.

O ! Thoughts of God unspeakable,
 Work in me unto Light :
Quicken deific impulses ;
 Keep the Shekinah bright,
Still shining clearer through the veil,
 Till faith gives way to sight.

O ! Name of God Ineffable,
 Undreamt of yet by me,
Let my soul listen, till it hear
 The far-off Melody ;
And on the Music of that Word,
 Rise—rise eternally !

THE BENEDICTION.

ADAPTED FOR RECITATION FROM "LA BÉNÉDICTION," BY
FRANÇOIS COPPÉE.

IN the year eighteen hundred and nine we took
Saragossa. I was a sergeant then.
As soon as the town was ours, the men
Were ordered to enter each street and nook
And search every house. So in we went.
Close-barred and shuttered at windows and doors,
(At once we saw that mischief was meant !)
The houses had a treacherous look,
As if they held part in some deadly plot.
No lie. For from all the upper floors
A very hail of bullet and shot
Fell like a fiery rain of death.
And we whispered bitterly under our breath,
"This is the work of the priests !" And thus—
Although we'd been fighting since break of day,
And the dust had well nigh blinded us,

And our clothes were discoloured with smoke and clay,
And our lips were burnt with the bitter taste
Of the cartridges,—when at the end of the street
We spied some priests escaping in haste,
We took our aim with a pleasant sense
Of fit reward and recompense,
Which made the murderous business sweet,
And shot them down as you'd shoot down rats—
Those long black cassocks and great black hats !

My company struck up a narrow lane,
A sort of alley. I went ahead.
And as I went, with cautious tread,
(Hard in the smoke and the dust to see plain !)
I watched the roofs to left and right ;
And suddenly in the strip of the sky
I saw the dull red pulsing light,
Like the breath of a forge, from the streets hard by
Where the flames had won the victory ;
Whilst rising swift and sinister
Came the sharp shrill shrieks of the massacre.

The road was thickly strewn with the dead.
We trod on them : no time to pick
Our way, the bodies lay so thick !
Well, slowly up the lane we crept.

A sharp look out all round was kept,
As stopping at every house our men
Burst open the door, and stooping low,
As if they were storming a wild beast's den,
Entered ; and in a minute or so
Came out again with bayonets red.
It was horrible work, let it be said.
And then they'd trace upon the wall
A sort of grim sign manual,
A cross, with their crimsoned hands, to show
That the house was ours. For it's well to know
In these narrow streets that you leave no foe
At your back. Still on and up the lane we went.
Not a bit of a tune to help us on,
Not a drum tap even,—silent as mutes !
The officers thoughtful, black brows bent ;
Veterans anxious, keeping in touch
At the elbow : and every mother's son
Sickening—no wonder !—at heart as much
As if we were boys and raw recruits.

Suddenly at the end of the street
We heard loud shouts in French for aid ;
Nothing for it but a rush to gain
Our friends in peril ! At once we made
A desperate charge, with answering cheers,

Right through the alley. And there we found
The men who had called, and the reason why.
It was a line of grenadiers,
Who every moment were losing ground,
Pressed back ignominiously
From some steps that rose in triple tiers
To a convent. Twenty monks at least,—
Black demons with their shaven crowns !—
Were gathered on the topmost stair.
White woollen crosses were on their gowns :
And with their blood-stained arms all bare,
Their sleeves thrown back, they clustered there,
Flinging large stones and heavy sticks ;
Whilst in their midst a half-mad priest
Beat back the soldiers everywhere,
With blows from a great gold crucifix.

Bah ! it was tragic !—what a scene !
We levelled and fired by platoon.
'Twas done quite coolly : like a machine !
We were weary and sick, and we seemed a troop
Of butchers. An executioner
Would scarce do such work without demur.
As we fired, we saw the horrible group
Of heroes,—for such in truth they were !—
Go down in a writhing heap.

As soon

As the thick smoke cleared, sure enough a mass
Of bodies lay there : and underneath
Long lines of blood crept dark and slow
Along and over the steps. And lo !
Behind this foreground, grim with death,
The great church opened out, immense,
And cool, and dark ; with shadows dense,
Lit dimly with the rich stained glass.
On the high altar candles burned.
And in the chancel, far away,
Shrined as it were in dusk profound,
A priest, with long hair silver grey,
Solemnly toward the altar turned,
And undisturbed as though no sound
Had reached him of the outside fray,
And wars on earth did not exist,
And death itself were not hard by,
Was finishing quite tranquilly
The office of the Eucharist.

Look here ! a bitter blasphemy
Had grown to be a part of me.
I was a very heathen—well,
Give it the right name—infidel.

And in my time . . . there let it be !
What need to tell you ? only this :—
No sort of violence came amiss
To me, the battered man of blood.
I had no fear of gods or men.
The very wrinkle on my lip,
Which wrought an evil line there when
I smiled, proclaimed my fellowship
With men who laugh at what is good.
But this old man who calmly stood
So tall and white and undismayed,
Made me—I scarce know how,—afraid !

“ Fire ! ” cried an officer. No doubt
The priest (I’m sure it was so !)—heard :
But quietly he stood, without
A quiver. Not a man had stirred.
Sudden the old man turned about,
And faced us with the Sacrament.

It was the point, you’ll understand,
At which the priest, concluding Mass,
Turns to the kneeling church, and has
To bless with an uplifted hand
The faithful and the penitent.
His vestments, with his arms outspread,

Looked like great wings. A beam of light
Happening to fall upon his head,
The silver whiteness of his hair
Gleamed like a halo. Standing there
He held the Monstrance high in air,
And with it three times made the sign
Of the cross. His hands were firm as mine.
He shook no more, I tell you, sirs,
Than if he stood before a crowd
Of awed and kneeling worshippers.
Then, speaking solemnly and slow,
With that strange chaunt which, as you know,
Priests always use, he cried aloud,—

“*Benedicat vos, omnipotens Deus.*”

“Fire!”—again the word of command.
We watched him still and could not stir;
When a soldier in our midst—the cur!—
Took aim and fired. The old man paled.
But never once his courage failed.
His eye gleamed brighter and his hand,
With blessing more beneficent,
Lifted on high the Sacrament :
And once again he spake and said,—

“*Pater et Filius.*”

What anger stirred us I know not :
What murderous mist, of hatred bred,
Blinded us, who can say ? A shot
Crashed forth again. Shame ? You are right.
A shame !—but still the thing was done.
The monk a moment bowed his head,
Whilst we stood breathless, every one.
Then, lifting up a death-pale face,
Propping himself as best he might
Against the altar slab, he tried
Feebly again in air to trace
The symbol of the Crucified :
And in a low voice—every word
In that deep hush was plainly heard—
With slowly closing eyes, he said—

“ Et spiritus sanctus ! ”

And at the altar steps fell dead !
The Monstrance, tumbling to the ground,
Rebounded three times on the stone,
And clattered down the steps. No sound
Was heard. Awe silenced every one ;
Yes, even us—hard, hardened men !
A hoarse laugh broke the silence then,
And a drummer-boy sang out—“ Amen ! ”

I think perhaps since life began
For me—now near its close !—almost
The only blessing I can boast,
In which I've had the smallest share,
Is this ! And some folks might declare
That given so, by such a man,
'Twas less of blessing than of ban.
But not so meant that priest, I'll swear !

We did our duty. He did his.
Priests know what soldiers' duty is.
They too are soldiers. Vive la Guerre !

THE VALSE.

TEN YEARS AFTER "A FAREWELL."

I HEAR it still—the Valse we heard that night
When last we met—a long ten years ago.
In those ten years how much has taken flight !
But it remains. Unaltered ? Yes and No.

I hear it still. But 'tis with other ears.
Its pathos deepens, but it has no pain.
And hearing it across the silent years
I know the meaning of its rhythmic strain.

The pain that once was as a searching flame
Died in my heart : and from its burial place
It rose again with wondrous bridal name,
And with a smile on its transfigured face.

And you—? I see you as you were, and dream
All my strange dream of years so long gone past.
And looking on you, through that Valse, you seem
To smile as one,—a conqueror to the last.

Yet is the victory yours? No victor I!
Victorious neither, both defeat endure.
Yours is an untriumphant victory,
Mine a defeat that holds investiture.

I do not blame you. Blame? who is to blame?
There's blame nowhere: we are but as we are.
Life works up from the crystal to the flame.
Each has his part—and each obeys his star.

It was not you I loved: but it was you
Who broke the dream wherein I dreamed of Love.
Who was it that I loved so wildly? who?
I love Her still. Her name I wot not of.

That valse-tune too—had it not power as well?
There's something words, I think, may not explain
In Music. Certain 'tis it holds a spell
Which makes for joy, but moves toward it thro' pain.

A valse—a valse ! Lightly we think of it,
But there's the mystery of the fatal Throe
Within its rhythmic pulse ; and thro' it flit
Strange hints of Hope, Desire, and Destiny.

That mystic time which sounds so cruel-sweet,
Suggests that dream I dreamt was but a part
Of what, in speech vibrating incomplete,
Makes the dumb secret of its Music-heart.

I longed to Hear : and you, you brought the word,
Not knowing,—and not caring, shall we add ?
Not greatly ! well, so let it be. I Heard.
And if perchance less pain I might have had

In taking home the message which you brought,
Less wonder also in it might have been.
Mine was the blame, if blame there be in aught.
You gave me something I might not have seen

Except for you. I give you gratitude
For that. • You smiled at love. Take this instead.
Let me not speak as one in tragic mood :—
I dreamed a dream :—there's no more to be said.

Save this :—that valse-tune holds the hidden clue.

There lies the secret—locked ! Love is the key.
May kinder hands unlock It unto you,
Than that white hand of yours once was to me.

THE SILVER BELL.

IN times half mythic, when the pathless wild
 Stretched from the white Alps to the Northern sea ;
And, pioneered by hermits brave and mild,
 Came on the Knightly Age of Chivalry,
With sword whose blade 'gainst mortal foe was keen
As was its cross-hilt 'gainst all foes unseen ;—

In those far times, in the fair Teuton land,
 There lived a youthful Prince beloved of all.
His father ruled with firm benignant hand,
 Wearing in peace the double coronal
Of sovereignty that writes its honour true,
And Age that is a crown of honour too.

The Prince had gained that happy April age
 When life seems glad to all who truly live.
And regal in his youth, his heritage,

His beauty, everything combined to give
Such plenitude of pleasure to his share,
That joy for him seemed written everywhere.

He saw it in the sunshine and the stars :
He felt its bright elixir thrill each limb :
In dark romantic tales of far-off wars,
In love-songs passionate, in legends dim,
In boyish game and in the ringing chase,
He wooed sweet life and kissed its blooming face.

“ Father,” he cried, “ why say you life is sad ?
I find the world so liberal of delight,
That though I, like my churls and vassals had
To toil, I still should find the toiling bright.
The paths of life are not so harsh and rough.
Give us but air and sunshine—’tis enough.

“ From priest and bookman, warrior, serf and sage
Rises this wail for happiness that flies,
As if the greybeards in revenge for age,
Grudging fair youth its flowers and sunlit skies,
By gloomy words and frowning brows were bent
To make the sadness they themselves lament.

"I would that I the whole wide world could tell
How glad at heart and well content am I !
I would my voice—like some clear silver bell—
Could ring my tale of pleasure far and nigh,
That hearing its joy-message day by day,
'Our Prince at least is happy !' men might say."

The king gazed fondly at the handsome boy,
His hand upon the fearless golden head.
"Were there such bell maybe 'twould not be joy
Would set it ringing after all," he said.
"We miscall things, and change with changing years ;
Joy sometimes lives in negatives and tears.

"But see, my son, we put thy thought to test.
'Our Prince is happy !' let the people say.
The silver bell, of which you spoke in jest,
It shall be cast and hung without delay ;
That we before we die may hear its voice,
And with our people in thy joy rejoice !"

The furnace fires were lit ; the silver weighed ;
Rare alkalies the metals purified ;
The molten ore the workman's will obeyed ;
The panting slaves at forge and anvil plied ;
The Bell was graved with text and symbol meet,
Till it stood forth in every part complete.

High o'er the tower which formed the city's crown
The wondrous Silver Bell was duly hung :
And thence long chains and cords were carried down
Straight to the Prince's room ; and these were slung
With such elaborate care and perfect poise,
The lightest touch would make the Bell give voice.
Nor was this all. The cords that moved the Bell
Others did move to ring in unison
In sacred fane and rock-built citadel,
So that the sound might travel on and on
To where the limits of the fertile plain
Touched on the forest's limitless domain.
Thus, through the echoing city far and near
Melodious peals of answering bells would ring,
And as the carillon with utterance clear
Its fearless challenge to the Fates would fling,
The people were to answer to the spell,
" Our Prince is happy ! Hark—the Silver Bell ! "
With sumptuous state and solemn ritual
The Bell was lifted to its aerial home.
Its purpose was proclaimed with trumpet call ;
And every eye turned toward the gilded dome,
Where, in a belfry open to the sky,
The Bell hung glittering like a star on high.

The courtiers and the people waited long,
Expectant of the silvery voice. The day
Sank to the west. Anon the vesper song
Rose from the Minster ; then the sun's last ray
Flamed on the city spires, and darkness fell.
But motionless and silent hung the Bell.

In his own chamber stood the Prince alone,
His hand upon the silken cord. A light
Burnt in the brazen lamp. His robe was thrown
Across the couch ; and through the quiet night
Came up the splash of fountains, and the sound
Of watch-drums beating out the midnight round.

“ Why should I wait ? What do I wait for ? What ?
For greater happiness ? That scarce can be.
My joy was something that I doubted not
Until my tongue proclaimed its certainty.
The boast itself suggests the questioning :
And at a question shy joy spreads her wing.”

Irresolute he mused, until at last
Sleep lulled his questions into quietude.
And so the one auspicious hour went past
Wherein he might have made his boasting good.
The Bell was his ; he might have rung it then.
That was his chance : it never came again.

For when next day his hand was on the cord,
And purpose shone forth clearly from his eyes,
There came a cry, and one rushed in—" My lord !
The King, your father, calls for you ! He dies !
Come quickly, and receive his parting breath !"
He went, and looked for the first time on Death.

The tale foretells itself in clearest speech.

Often the young Prince raised his hand to ring
The Bell, but ere that eager hand could reach
The cord, his purpose sank to faltering :
Or if joy came, alas ! the joy had flown
Before he fully knew it for his own.

When he was crowned he heard a nation's cheers.

His bosom swelled. Is he not happy now ?
Yes ; but within his eyes rose bitter tears,
Thinking whose crown it was that clasped his brow.
The boy-king and the orphan met in him :—
The boy's heart laughed—the orphaned eyes were dim.

A war broke out. His helmet led the host.

He swept his foes before him like the wind.
His name in triumph rang from coast to coast,
And shouting crowds his homeward pathway lined.
But whilst the laurel crowned anew his head,
His friend upon the battlefield lay dead.

Lovely his bride, betrothed from early youth.

“ I will be true as wife and Queen,” she said,
“ But ask not Love. ’Tis best you know the truth.

With one I loved my heart of love is dead.
The people’s good remains : for it I live.
I give you faith, but love I cannot give !”

Yet when the influence of maternal love
Warmed her cold heart to joy in life again,
Her husband’s every look to her did prove
Such tender chivalry that she was fain
To own him worthy of a worthier mate ;
At last he gained her love :—too late ! too late !

He never knew it till the hour was near
When memory of it only could be his,
For she lay dying. In his bended ear
She whispered low, “ I love you !” Then her kiss
Did seal the secret of their two lives fast,
And in that kiss of love her spirit passed.

Let the long years roll by, with changes wrought
By wear and tear and fever of a life
That under all its outward calm was fraught
With penetrating sympathy, and rife
With that same fervid spirit which, as boy,
Made for such very insolence of joy.

At last the man is old and bowed and white,
His fourscore years are halting to their goal ;
The world is fast receding from his sight ;
His face grows wistful with the parting soul.
And beckoning feebly to those standing by,
He says, " Bring me the boy before I die ! "

It was his grandson. Handsome, brave, and strong,
Light of his eyes, hope of the old man's days !
Tales of his prowess had been told in song,
And prophecy for him turned into praise.
" Summon the Prince ! "—the word flies far and wide,
And the youth hastens to his grandsire's side.

Upon a couch the dying King is lain,
Even in the castle turret, where, as Prince,
He used to live. His dimming eyes again
Look on the scene on which he looked long since,
A happy-hearted boy ! His faltering hand
Stretches itself as if to bless the land.

Slowly he gazes round him. Is there not
A silken cord up yonder ? Yes. Grown old,
Dusty and frayed ! Ah !—memories forgot
Crowd on his brain ; a hundred scenes unfold.
He lifts his hands—they touch the mouldering cord.
" Father ! " he murmurs, " I recall your word !

“The Silver Bell has not been rung by Joy !

Far liker 'twill be tolled for obsequy.”

Even as he speaks, with tear-bright eyes, the boy

Runs in, and with strong arms full tenderly

Doth clasp him, whilst the old face raised to his

Feels the hot tears which consecrate the kiss.

“Father !” he cried, “for so to me thou art,

Since other father I remember none,

I kneel to thee, and from my very heart

Beseech thy blessing. Bless me.” “Ah ! my son,—

Who seem'st to me in very truth

An angel born of my remembered youth,—

“I bless thee, and I bid thee take thy throne.

And may the King of kings to your heart give

The will to make His sovereign will your own,

And for the welfare of His people live.

Prophetic light upon my soul doth shine,

The joy my life has missed I find in thine !

“It come upon me in this hour of death,

With light ineffable, and hope divine.

Reach me yon cord. Now, with my latest breath,

Life seems beginning. Clasp my hand in thine,

And give me of thy strength ; for Joy has passed

Away from Self and found its own at last.”

And suddenly the Silver Bell on high,
Rang clear and full, and flung its message wide ;
And as the King fell back with broken cry,
The answering peal burst out on every side ;—
But jangled, harsh,—with cruel discord crossed,—
Its purpose passed away—its meaning lost !

It was a thing unthought of and forgot ;
Buried with those who mouldered in the ground.
Even the young Prince knew the story not,
And trembled at the unexpected sound.
Its only answer was his grief-bowed head,
And this sharp cry of pain—"The King is dead !"

Then, with a trembling voice, an aged man,
The Abbot of the Minster, straightway told
The tale. Swift down his cheeks the hot tears ran,
Remembering all the days and hopes of old,
As, stooping o'er the white and death-crowned brow,
He said, "Thank God, the King is happy now !"

Then all did kneel, and from the Chapel nigh
Floated the chant of intercessory prayer.
And as the echoing bells discordantly
Died sadly on the hushed and heavy air,
On every lip the voices twain were wed—
"The King is happy !" and "The King is dead !"

A STATEMENT.

I WILL not sing our love, lest singing it
I mar the living song it sings unsung.
Love so perfected needs a perfect wit,
And most imperfect is my witless tongue.

Love,—though old earth have seen its counterpart
Ten thousand times in every age and shore,—
Is ever new-born in each living heart,
A thing of wonder never known before !

And words which are not each and all its own,
Though they were echoes of the sweetest song
That ever lover's poesy hath known,
Would seem such new-born miracle to wrong.

Hence it would take a verse more skilled than mine
To put in words as fresh as is our love,
The light that from your life on mine doth shine,
The faith that needs no song its strength to prove.

So if my tongue hath, all these constant years,
 Been mute, nor framed a verse, sweet friend, to thee,
Blame not the heart that with such reason fears,
 Lest it should sing our love unworthily.

But rather listen to that unheard song
 Sung in my thought to thee each hour we live ;
Its poetry is sovereign sweet and strong,
 And yet 'tis all mine own. *That* let me give.

TO B. H.

(IN MEMORIAM HIS SISTER, WHO DIED MAY 23, 1885,
AGED FIVE YEARS.)

CHILDREN there are so bright and fair
They seem almost too frail and rare
For this our heavy earthly air.

They may not long time with us stay,
Even like Angels—as we say—
They come to us and pass away.

Yet in their little life's brief span
They do a work the wisest man
Were proud to make his wisdom's plan.

For they bring Love which holds no sting,
And in their bright companioning
Life half unfolds its closed wing.

The world, made better by their smile,
Smiles in return, and for awhile
Forgets its greed and veils its guile.

Such was your little sister. She
Incarnate music seemed to be—
A little human melody !

No one could look upon her face
Or watch her winning little ways
And feel no stir of answering grace.

The fairest child I ever knew !
Her hair was silken floss, in hue
Like ripening corn. Her eyes were blue.

You know the pink convolvulus
That grows upon the sea shore ? Thus
Her flower-like face did look to us.

A haloed atmosphere and scent
Exhaled from her ; and as one bent
To kiss her, in acknowledgment

Of all she was, one grew aware
Of some bright aura in the air,
A something good one longed to share.

Her roseleaf lips would give a kiss
That spoke of purer worlds than this ;
Her breath was sweet as new milk is.

So like to you was she that sure
She seemed your Guardian Angel pure,—
Yourself in fairy miniature !

And people as they saw you pass
Would oft look back ; the picture was
As fair a sight and pretty as

Could well be seen : the little maid
All in her summer white arrayed
Holding your hand, demure and staid.

I have a pleasant memory of
That afternoon whereon we drove
To Gosleston Pier—a place we love !

She watched with dancing eyes the scene,
Sitting enthroned us two between,
A perfect baby Beauty-Queen !

The little child the Holy Book
Tells us that Jesus blessed and took
As sign of Heaven, I think did look

Like her. And in her childhood sweet
Immortal childhood now we greet,
And hear the lips divine repeat—
“Of such are the kingdom of God.”

THE WAY OF IT.

(WRITTEN TO A TUNE.)

LIFE at the best, dear,
 What can we say of it ?
Be it confessed, dear,
 Dark is the way of it !
Less is the knowledge
 The more that we know ;
Deeper the puzzle
 The older we grow :
Mystery ever !
 Is it not so ?
Yes, we must own it,
 That is the way of it :
That is the best, dear,
 The best we can say of it !
Life is compact
 Of hopes and fears :
Life is a fusion

Of smiles and tears :—
Really and truly
Much what one hears
Wise people say of it !
Whether we view it
With eyes of the seers,
Or wish to make merely
A sort of child's play of it.
Still there is something
That rings through the years,
A longing—a question,—
The which, it appears,
Sounds more and more
On our unwilling ears
Strive as we may
To get *out* of the way of it.

Ah, but you smile !
Dismal things may be true,
But they won't happen, dear,—
Will they ?—to you !
Ah ! in our youth
That is what we all say of it.
If we but knew !
If we but knew !
If we but treasured

Life's tenderest flowers !
If we but valued it
 Whilst youth was ours !
If ! and oh, if !—
 And if we did this,
Or if we did that,
 Or the other did miss,
Life would be—possibly—
 Worse than it is !
Looking at Life
 In the radiant May of it,
Little we reck
 What wise people say of it.

So, if Life be dreary,
 • And sad, and the rest of it,
Gold of the rainbow
 Be ever the quest of it,
What can be done
 But just make the best of it ?
Bad is the best,
 • If it's true what they say of it !
Well, in our hearts
 This at least we may pray of it,

Let True Love

Light every ray of it !

Then if it prove, dear,

That our love is true,

What will it matter

To me, love, or you,

What wiser folk

May declare is the way of it ?

Let them all speak

Of life as they may of it,

Give us a storm-cloud

To darken each day of it,

Minus the rainbow

That lives in the grey of it,

What do we care ?

They have got the wrong lay of it.

They do not love ;

And Love's the mainstay of it !

Since then of Life, dear,

The best we can say of it

Is, it is Mystery,

Make what you may of it ;—

Mystery always,

The more that we see of it.—

Mystery ever,
And that we agree of it ;—
Love holds the only
Possible key of it !

That, I believe,
Is the best I can say of it.
Would you know more ?
Go to Love, then, and pray of it
That it should teach ye :—
It will. 'Tis the way of it !

FIRE.

CIRCLEWISE move the elements,
The Ancient wisdom saith—
By death of Air the water lives ;
Earth by the water's death ;
Fire from the Earth ; and Air once more
From Fire doth take the breath.

Eternal Flux thus rules them all.

Yet, through all change they own
One primal, final Element
For which no name is known,
Even as Man is one, in whom
A Fourfold state is shown.

For Earth his Body claims, its own :
Mind as the Air is free :

Unfathomed Water is the Soul,—
Who knows its mystery ?
And in the Spirit that aspires
The flame of Fire we see.

Thus the states rise, and in the Fire
We find the Logos great
That makes one living Entity
Out of the Fourfold state,
And gives the Mystery of earth,—
The Man Regenerate.

On every altar Earth has known
The sacred fires outshine ;
From every temple Man has built
Flashes the answering sign :
And Flame doth symbolise alike
The Good and the Malign.

And still before our altars burn
The lamps and tapers fair ;
The fuming censer still sends up
Its cloud into the air :
And Genius, Anger, Love, and Faith,
The Fiery tincture share.

The Flaming Sword,—the Burning Bush,—
The bolts of Sinai,—
The Pillar, Cloud and Light in one,—
The Chariot from the sky,—
The sun-bright photosphere that rings
The Name of Adonai,—

The baleful fires of Ashtaroth,
Of Cybele and Bel,—
The reek of torch and brasier,
Dark with inversive spell,—
The awful signatures of Flame
We symbolise in "Hell,"—

They all are Kabalistic types
Of depthless mystery :
Images of the Living Fire,
Burning eternally,
Awful,—adorable—biune—
Anguish and Ecstasy.

The Furnace which is martyrdom
May prove in other wise,
The Son of God's most radiant tryst :
Point of Ignition lies
In enmity : but love the Flame,
And lo ! in Love, Fear dies.

Shine, Spirit ! till your Light become
My everliving Name !
Burn, Fire ! until my life is wrought,
Through all its parts the same !
O God ! I would aspire to grow
One with Thine Unseen Flame.

BALLADE.

TO THE FÖHN.¹

A WIND from the South comes up in the night ;
Over the mountains it sweeps to the lake.
The darkness is checkered with shadow and light
As moonbeams the racing stormclouds rake.
Are not the flowers of Easter at stake ?
The South Wind knows it, and seems to say,
“ The Spring is up, and the Earth is awake !
The snows of the Winter are melting away ! ”

I' the morning, all hail to the gladdening sight !
As fair a scene as the earth can make !
Ah ! 'tis not alone that its Beauty is bright,
But its sense of Life doth the whole heart take

¹ The Föhn is the south wind, which melts the Alpine snow. There is a Swiss proverb that, “ Unless the Föhn blows, the sun and ‘le bon Dieu’ can do nothing with the snow.”

With a joy so great that the heart doth ache !
Hark ! water is laughing, which many a day
Frost has held chained in a prison opaque !
The snows of the Winter are melting away !

The grasses and flowers, that lie 'neath the white,
Have moved in the earth : quick song-pulses shake
The blackbird's throat as he stops in his flight :
And deep in the drift-covered tangle of brake
Is born the bud of the first " snowflake."
And as children remember the flowers of May
The avalanche thrills with its first heart-quake !
The snows of the Winter are melting away !

ENVOI.

O heart ! 'twere a shame if Great Nature spake
And you answered not. Cry Yea to her Yea !
And tell her for you too—for Springtime's sake—
The snows of the Winter are melting away !

A BALLADE OF BUTTERFLIES.

" Butterflies will some day be valued as one of the most important branches of biological science." — BATES'S " Naturalist on the Amazon."

.

STRANGE are the truths that Great Science doth teach !

Grave is her utterance, grand is her aim.

Far less inclined to a joke than to preach,

Holds she her mind in a serious frame.

Yet, when to one little fact she came,

Which somewhat ~~her~~ gravity seemed to upset,

She owned it at once—the dignified Dame !—

Science to butterflies owes a great debt !

Pause for a moment or two, I beseech,

Just to consider how trite and how tame

Sounds, after this, the poor moralist's speech

Crying to Butterflies, " Fie !" and " For Shame !" "

Surely the fribbles were scarcely to blame

Were they to answer him back in a pet—

" Rubbish ! we're things of remarkable fame !

Science to butterflies owes a great debt ! "

When—o'er the pink-budding boughs of the peach,—
Sulphur-wings beat, in the song of “*je t'aime !*”
When—high in air, (safe from Science's reach !)—
Foolish fritilleries flutter like flame,
Just as if flowers were out for a game !—
'Tis not alone—(and let us regret
Good folks so often ignore the same !)—
Science to butterflies owes a great debt.

ENVOI.

“ Emperor,” gorgeous in habit and name,—
“ Painted Lady,” *un peu coquette*,—
For ever this honour you now may claim—
Science to butterflies owes a great debt !

THE RUBÁIYÁT OF OMAR KHAYYÁM.

•
DRINK as we may the Song is magic Wine :
Yet at the Tavern Door what is the Sigh ?

See, how he smiles who proffers us the Draught ;
He leaves to us the Vintage and the Vine.

Ruby or amber do you wish to see ?
Call the Cup either, that the Cup will be.

Is the Door open ? Enter, friend, and drink !
The lock will turn if you possess the key.

TO CHARLES KINGSLEY.

GREATER than many whom the world has hailed
As greatest, thou by inner greatness failed
To gain the height your footsteps might have scaled.

The narrower paths in which you bravely trod,
With feet by purpose clean and active shod,
Thou took'st as limits given thee by God.

Did not the heart within thee often burn
From that strict chosen path aside to turn,
The beckoning victories of the world to earn ?

And more : did Thought not long for ampler flight
To regions where Thought passes Day and Night,
And darkness swallows what we call the Light ?

To highest point thy vision seems to rise
When facing those unworded mysteries
To which our age turns blind or blinded eyes.

But the strong heart, by fiery pulses stirred,—
The poet-promptings by thy spirit heard,—
Were hushed for what was deemed the Higher Word.

Content and happy in thy discipline,—
Disciple to the last,—in thee was seen
A man ev'n greater than he might have been !

TO ROBERT BROWNING.

AFTER RECITING "SAUL," "EVELYN HOPE," AND
"ABT VOGLER."

GREAT poet, in whose secret mines we find the unseen
gold,—

Singer of things unspeakable, and hardly to be told,—

Adept at "music" more than sound, and as the Ages
old,—

O Mystic, silent to the world, ~~but~~ yet proclaiming clear,
To those who know, the Word of one who holds the
Inner Sphere,—

Thy message is a magic one, and few who listen, hear !

'Tis not the Hebrew Shepherd, nor Abt Vogler speaks
through thee,

They are, but Names to guard thyself, and veil that
Mystery

Which ever hides behind a veil and speaks in Harmony.

I think a sense of something great, a wonder and a light,
Passes from out the very words even to those whose sight
Takes not thy way, or taking it, notes not how high thy
flight.

I know that some who listen hear. Their hearing would
suffice,
Were all the others deaf and mute : but in some hidden-
wise
A deep responsive echo seems from every heart to rise.

No voice so great as thine, so freed from rhapsody or
moan,
Has in this age of ours been raised, with world-compelling
tone,
To plead for Thought which by the world is little prized
or known.

And we, who humbly and afar follow that Thought Divine,
Do thank thee for the shining words through which you
flash the sign
To us. If as I speak those words the light through them
may shine

On others,—nay, on one!—that light has on my spirit
shone

Not all in vain. Twofold my debt :—the gift were great,
alone ;

But in it I grow giver too ; speaking, I pass it on !

A HARMONY.

ALL the world is full of music—
So at least the wise folk say :
There is music in the sunshine,
Such as shines on us to-day :
Rainbow-music in the storm-cloud :
Flower-music in the ground :
And the harmonies of colour
Answering those of song and sound.

All, you see, is but Vibration,
Given alike to eye and ear :
Only, for a variation,
This we see and that we hear.
All's the same in different language
Springing from one root above.
There perhaps will find the secret
Is not far from those who love.

All the world is full of music :
Let me not my cadence miss.
It is sealed within your spirit ;—
Let me learn it in a kiss !
Everywhere I hear it ringing :
What is the refrain thereof ?
Ah ! why ask ? Perhaps the secret
Is not far from those who love.

O my love, the real true Music
Just begins where this sound dies :
On the other side of silence
Are the spirit's harmonies.
As the Alchemists have told us
There is Fire beyond a doubt
Burning in the inner Ether
When the flame we see goes out.
•
Could we hear the Sound of all things
We should find it wondrous true ;
And amidst the whole world's chorus
I should know which Note was You !
Love, to those who know, is Music
Born within the atmosphere
Of that world of finer essence
Which but few can see or hear.

How the sunshine in your hair, dear,—
 (I am listening !)—softly sings !
All the thoughts within your spirit
 Vibrate true like golden strings.
May no discords from my life, dear,
 Those vibrations falsify !
All such discords now you love me
 Will resolve in harmony.

Do not heed them if they tell you,—
 They, the over-wise, to-day,—
That the world has grown weary
 Of the Lover and his Lay.
Love the root and flower of Life is,
 And the world in which we move,
Live and move and have our being,
 Has no meaning—save for Love !

He who hears it, he who sees it,
 Smiles at peace amid the strife,
And its song will solve the riddle
 Of the sphinx that men call Life.
Hear it in the seas and rivers !
 See it in the starlit sky !
'Tis no poet's idle dreaming,—
 'Tis the world's great Mystery !

Thus the world is full of music !

From the air an Echo falls :

Even in the ground beneath us,

Something answers—something calls !

All the world—say I ? Look higher !

Heaven itself is made thereof.

And we feel—we know—the secret

Is not far from those who love.

INITIATION.

THROUGH daily joy and daily pain
One truth is clear discerned,—
The lessons which this life can teach
Must in this life be learned.

Here, or none other where at all
Those lessons learned must be.
Refused, they are a broken link
In our eternity.

Consider :—we, and we alone,
And only now and here,
Can do that thing which comes to us
In Duty plain and clear.

There's neither small, nor mean, nor low,
To one who sees the Real :
Perfection raises everything
To its untired Ideal.

We long to know the Way : and yet
The secret of the skies
May lie in some rejected task
To which we close our eyes.

For he who does the will shall know.
What promise is more plain ?
Yet this, of wisdom's many roads
Will fewest followers gain.

•
Whatever comes to us to do,
Though dark it seem to sight,
Simply because it comes to us,
That is our road to Light.♦♦

O ! lesson hardest to be learnt !
Some great thing to be done
Were easy, welcome. But this thing
Is welcome unto none.

Yet once accepted it becomes
The key of human Fate.
Life's Mysteries unveil themselves :
♦We are Initiate.

A SON OF ORPHEUS.

“GOOD-NIGHT ! good-night ! The feast is done,
I must be getting on my way.
‘ Happy the bride the sun shines on ! ’
And never brighter sunlight shone
Than ours this happy bridal day !
Another glass ? Well, then, just one.
A parting bumper, as you say,—
A brimming glass !—it is the last.
Swiftly the smiling hours fly past
When young feet trip it on the floor. ‘
What ! yet another dance ?—one more ?—
My fiddle’s tired . . . old !—I too !
Well, look you—if I play for you,
You will not grudge my fiddler’s fee ?
And what is that, you ask, maybe ?—
What—and how much ?—Why, listen—this—
A good, fair, honest, buxom kiss !
You’ll pay ?—Then for your dance ; here ’tis ! ”

He fiddled well, and well the feet
The floor in tuneful measure beat.
And fast and faster went the bow,
And fast and faster, to and fro,
The dancers danced : till when the flight
Of foot and bow were at their height,
And through the merry laughing rout
The rhythm of the polka swung
Like waves of wind the wheat among,
The fiddler broke off with a shout.—

“ Good-night ! this time, good-night, indeed,
In vain ye tempt, in vain ye plead.
No ; not another bar I’ll play.
Have ye not danced enough I say ?
Toed it and heeled it all the night ?
For shame ! you’re cruel. Nay is nay.
I’ve far to go : and ere ’twas light
This morning did I start from home.
We’ve had a jolly day ! Now come !—
Give me my fee.—Then one glass more,
And see me safe outside the door.
Charles, here’s my hand. God bless you, boy !
Marie, good-night ! Health, wealth, and joy
Be yours—and always—all thro’ life !
Here’s luck to bridegroom and to wife ! ”

The farewell voices die away.
The light that streamed with ruddy ray
Out from the open cottage door,
• Fades down and dwindles more and more :
And now it gleams, and now 'tis gone !
The road turns sharply to the right,
Up the hillside he trudges on
As best he can.

'Tis dead of night.
The clouds are scurrying o'er the sky;
The wind with ghostly homeless sigh
Wails in the trees : and hark ! hard by,
The night-jar croaks with bodeful cry.
Some snow fell on the hills last night.
Above the woods of fir and pine,
The great slopes, looming phantom-white,
Across the midnight darkness shine.
But naught of this the fiddler heeds ;
Well-used to dark and lonesome ways,
Onward with stumbling feet he speeds,
And only thinks of all the day's
Good fare and fun—and that sweet fee
She gave—and gave so willingly !—
And how uncommon pleased he'll be—
(The road is rough just here and steep !)—

To be in bed and fast asleep.
Meanwhile, come—courage ! step along !
And cheer the darkness with a song.

For, truth to tell we've had enough,
Red wine and white, good generous stuff,
Has freely flowed for every guest,
And that last bottle was the best.
A glorious day, the saints be praised !
And if we feel a trifle dazed,
Well, what of that ? The cool night air
Revives us : and a merry heart
Is good sometimes. We have our part
Of trouble,—more than is our share !
So let us troll our song to-night,
Thankful for good wine, red and white,
And neither blame ourselves nor it
If we just trip a little bit,
And here and there forget our song
As in the dark we trudge along.
Soon be at home and safe asleep !

Here are the cross roads. Shall we keep
The highroad,—or that short cut try,
And save a good two miles thereby ?
A thousand feet or more below,

The village lies : and yonder, see !
The first white little patch of snow.
The road or short cut shall it be ?
The wood perhaps is dark and black
At night. Ah, bah ! We know each yard ;
No fear of straying from the track.
Safe, safe enough ! and not so hard
As that long road. We'll try the wood.
The moon will soon have risen. Good.
So in we go.

Dark, dark and still,
Among the tall black pines : so dark
You scarce can see a tree until
Your hand in passing scrapes the bark.
Onward he trudges. Not a sound.
He knows each turn and inch of ground.
How silent 'tis in here ! And hark !
What's that ? 'Twas some one following !
No, no :—but he has ceased to sing.
A sense of loneliness has put
Its finger on his lip : his foot
Is somehow spurred to hasten on.
Look !—stop a minute,—something shone
Out of the darkness yonder. There !
It shone again—and now 'tis gone.

He turns to look behind, and sees
What seem two eyes of greenish glare
That watch him from between the trees—
Two cruel spectral eyes that stare !
His heart is nipped with sudden frost
Of fear. Those eyes ! And see !—another pair !—
Mon Dieu !—and there !—and there !—and there !
Encircled by them everywhere !
“ A pack of wolves ! I’m lost ! I’m lost ! ”

He looks at them with freezing breath :
He knows they are the eyes of Death.
His voice breaks up the silent air
In shout on shout. Against a pine,
He sets his back. The void black night
Is starred with those fierce eyes. They shine
Like some accursed magic ring
That now is slowly narrowing
To hem its wretched victim in ;
Till almost by their wicked light
He seems to see the teeth that grin,
The mouths that snarl with cruel fangs.
He feels his life each moment hangs
Over the edge of doom. But see—
That pair of eyes is coming close,
Closer and closer—and he knows

Horror will soon be pain. His lips
Refuse the cry of agony
The heart compels. He faints and slips
Upon the smooth fir-needles,—grips
A branch, and in the struggle twangs
The fiddle slung behind his back.

And in a moment all the pack
Of wolves start back, and listen—dazed,
Arrested ! Like a flash there shoots
Across the fiddler's brain a tale
Once heard, of how these savage brutes
Are tamed by music. Heaven be praised !
The saints forbend the hope should fail !
Swift as the thought, the violin
Is clutched, the bow is poised : and thin
And shrill, as if with frightened wail,
The strings, with almost human cry,
Croak out their challenge, and begin
Their grim death-dance of agony.

Play, fiddler, play ! for life you play.
Give them your best. No moment stay.
Play, play, with quickening pulse and breath.
That catgut is the leash of Death ;
Once broke or slipped, 'tis at your throat !

A devil peers between each note,
And at one pause, why, in he'll slip
And have you writhing in his grip !
Play, man, as never yet did man
Since first the fiddling world began !
A polka ! Dance, wolves, dance ! nor glare
With those fierce eyes so still and grim.
Horribly patient stand they there,
All silently besieging him ;
But for the moment kept at bay
In some unknown mysterious way,
By some uncomprehended link
Such as no brain would dream or think
Could be betwixt such alien things
As hearts of wolves and fiddle-strings !

And yet is it not known to us
The Thracian conquered Tartarus ?
So great is music's magic spell
It binds in one Heaven, Earth, and Hell.

But still the fiddler works amain.
An hour ago the self-same strain
Re-echoed through the dancing room
And gained that sweet kiss for its fee :
And now it almost seems to be

Played in a black and stifling tomb
With grisly ghouls for company.
A witches' sabbat were less mad !
A Brocken revel never had
More subtly fiendish mockery
Of joy. A dance of Death it is !
Agony's stiff paralysis
Threatens his aching arms and hands :
And yet as on hot iron he stands,
And still he madly plies the strings,
And works the bow and madlier sings,
Shouting anon a cry of fear
In the last hope that some, mayhap,
Returning from the feast may hear.

Ah, God ! a string breaks with a snap !
No time to fix another one !
On, on : pray Heaven the others last !
A twang—a cry ! Another's gone !
Sense almost swoons—hope stands aghast.
Nothing he sees but eyes—eyes—eyes !
The world is but a vault of black
Lit with those hungry lurid eyes,
Resounding with despairing cries,
Grotesque—insane—demoniac !

“ Help ! help ! I’m lost.” A twang, a crack !

The third string gone : but one remains.

The music dwindles, falters, wanes :—

Yet on its weak and trembling strains

A man’s life hangs. A slender cord

For such a weight ! A child’s toy-sword

Against an armed and murderous horde !

The brutes begin to feel the reins

Are growing slack. They edge more near

With more of hunger, less of fear.

The end is surely come at last.

The poor scraped notes diminish fast,

Although he works with might and main.

Not long will he have power to sway

The devil in the wolfish brain,

Or keep the savage beasts at bay.

And lo ! as if to make the doom

More hideous still, the Stygian gloom

Is lifted. Suddenly a glare

Of moonlight makes the whole place bright,

And with its weird and cruel light

The horror of the scene lays bare.

It is too much ! It is too much !

Ah ! neither tortured string nor heart

Can any longer bear their part :
They snap beneath this final touch.
Both in that awful moment fail,
And sense goes out in one sharp wail—
One last despairing cry for help !
But lo ! as all the savage pack
Bark out the signal for attack,
A shot is heard :—a whip's sharp crack !—
Jangle of sledge-bells on the snow !
And bang, bang, bang, the rifles go !
Two brutes fall dead with snarl and yelp ;
The rest, like cowards, all turn tail
And skurrying off in wild affright,
Vanish as spectres in the night.

Prone on the earth the fiddler lies,
Nor knows the struggle's happy end ;
Nor hears the loud advancing cries,—
“ Courage ! We're near ! Where are you, friend ? ”

Some of his neighbours going home
Just in the nick of time had come.
Their guns took up the conquering tale
Where music had begun to fail,
And made the fittest coda, sure,
To such a demon overture.

The fiddler, snatched in truth from death,—
The veriest jaws of death,—they bore
Rejoicing to his cottage door,
Shouting a loud triumphant tune,
And left him safe and sound beneath
His own roof.

Late next afternoon

The curé, having heard somewhat
About the story ; (such a boon
To village gossips happens not
Too often !)—takes his way to hear
From out the man's own mouth the true
Account. And as he's drawing near,
He thinks he spies a something new
Above the little carven shrine
Wherein, holding the Child Divine,
An image of Our Lady stands
Blessing the threshold with her hands.
A lamp hangs down before the niche,
Always alight ; to tend to which
Is every day the fiddler's care.
All this the curé knows : but there,—
What's that ?—above, against the wall :—
Some relic or memorial,

Symbol of gratitude or prayer,
To pious memory dedicate ?
The old man puts his glasses on
To look. His spectacles are dim.
Or his eyesight failing him ?
He wipes his eyes at any rate,
Whilst, with some text appropriate,
He murmurs out a benison.
For a strong nail is hammered in
Above the shrine : and from it, lo !
Hangs the poor stringless violin,
And under it the broken bow.

THE SIGNATURE.

Not with the passing name I bear.
By chrism and by heritage
Sign I myself, whilst years endure,
To you, O Friend, in friendship sure ;
But with a greater signature
Than pen can write upon this page.

I write it in the spirit-light,
And with that Name, unspoken, real,
Which not in this life will be shown ;
That New Name which shall be my own,-
The Name by which the soul is known,
And only Spirit can reveal :—

The Name I hear and answer to
When life has risen to its Best ;
The Name that Music tells me of ;

Which lives in Silence, Light, and Love ;
The Name to which my life doth move
And till it find it, knows no rest.

The name by which I move in life
Is but a passing badge to me,
A badge to hold and honour well ;
The many memories it can tell
Of lives well-lived stand sentinel
And challenge me to keep it free.

But for the Man within the man
There is another Name, be sure.
Its script we may not yet divine :
But 'tis with that Name I would sign
My real self in friendship thine.
Take that eternal signature.

VITA MYSTICA.

I. *Elixir Vitæ.*

CALM thou the waters of thy soul,
Unruffled let them lie,
Till, crystal-clear, they may reflect
The overarching sky.

Let Fear be stilled : and all thy thought
Unto that point be set
That does not hasten on toward Hope,
Nor linger to regret.

Calm thou thy soul, till o'er its face,
As o'er primeval seas,
The spirit moves, and Life takes form
At the Divine decrees.

Forget the things that are behind ;
 Water defiled may gain
Its purity, without an atom lost,
 It does but lose its stain.

In confidence possess thy soul,
 In Patience, Calmness, Love,
Till, crystal-clear, its waters lie,
 Calm as the skies above.

So will they the Elixir bright
 Of Life most truly be :
The magic draught which dowers us
 With Immortality.

For sweetened by eternal springs,
 And purified by Pain;
They are the Cup whereof who drinks
 Shall never thirst again.

2. *Transmutation.*

IN Flesh Immortal Life begins ;
 Heaven lies within, 'tis writ :
The Body may a temple be
 If God transfigure it.

There may arise a Bethlehem
 Within thy soul to-day ;
And in the "Manger" of thy Life
 Thou must the Christ-Child lay.

Not in the palace, or the Inn,
 But in the oxen's stall :
'Twas there the Wise Men found the Birth
 Of Life Celestial.

3. *Magic.*

THE mystery of Growth who knows ?
 A silent, unseen Force,
Apart from thee it works its will,
 And takes its unseen Course.

The seed becomes a plant, the plant
 Bursts into bud and flower ;
By alchemy of earth and air
 And nurture of the shower.

But whence the substance of the plant ?
 •How did it upward grow ?
Not from the seed,—not from the mould.
 The mystery none may know.

Take note the lilies of the field,
 They neither toil nor spin ;
 Plant thou the seed within the soul,
 And lo ! the Flower within !

4. *Prima Materia.*

THE element of Human Will
 Is not yet wholly known,
 Although its right of miracle
 Has oft been taught and shown.

In Thought we hold the motive power
 That made the universe :
 Its triumph—Truth—could make us free,
 Its slavery is our curse.

Miracles are but sovereign Thought;
 Latent, they lie in us.
 In other truth, we see there's naught
 That is miraculous.

If we could only realise
 The Best our Thought can give,
 That Thought alone would limit then
 The Life we might receive.

5. *The Philosopher's Stone.*

TRUTH must be true in every plane.

The Magian only wrought

In baser substance what his soul

Discerned in worlds of Thought.

Surely the alchemy of old

Was an attempted sign

To show, in Matter, truths the soul

Worked out in things divine.

The New Name graven on the Stone,—

The mystic Stone of white—

These are but symbols :—finite things

Ciphering the Infinite.

The search to find the Stone is hard :

Strait road and narrow gate.

The world cares not to walk therein :—

The Life Regenerate.

The road is free to every one,

Yet heavy is the toll ;

By many names the road is called,

By many names the goal.

But each and all have meant the same
Since first the world began :—
The Life that lives within the life,
The Man within the man.

And he who once perceives this quest
Nor life nor death will stay :
But Few, of even chosen ones,
There be who find the way.

Many, how many, lose the clue !
Many, how many, fall !
And some lose heart, and some lose life,
And scorn is given to all.

Yet he who follows out the quest
His life transmuted is :
Through all its Seven Spheres he feels
Celestial genesis.

The Cross becomes the Tree of Life,
The Crown of Thorns the Wreath ;
He spells the Words of Power that takes
All Victory from Death.

His is the Inward Man that speaks
As one who sees and KNOWS :
The Interlaced Triangles his,
The Flaming Star and Rose.

He passes Earth's penumbral shade,
He conquers all eclipse :
His is the Stone of White the Seer
Saw in Apocalypse.

•
It squares the circle in its lines :
Numbers are fused in One :
Its sphere contains the Universe ;
Its light outshines the Sun.

6. *The Seal of Solomon.*

THE Seer that in the desert slept
Beheld the angels fair
Ascending and descending still
Upon the Golden Stair.

The lines descending to the Stone,—
To us the Beth-el true !—
Became in turn ascending lines
To meet Descent anew.

Behold the mystic symbol here,
Graved on the opal stone :
The two Triangles Interlaced,—
The Seal of Solomon.

And one descends and one ascends ;
They cross in every line :
And as a star shall shine the Soul
Whose Life has wrought the Sign.

7. *The Word of Power.*

“GIVE us a Sign !” the people cried.
The Master stayed his hand.
No sign was given, save one they knew
And would not understand.

Whate'er might soothe the suffering
Was never put aside :
But for the sign of Magic Power
It always was denied.

Though from the Grave one rose and spake,
Him would not earth believe.
For he who hears not silence speak
Cannot the Word receive.

THE REED-PIPE.

THE reed's a perfect instrument,
But hard to learn, they say :
A thought too much of pitch—and lo !
The sound flies off, away !

The note at once the octave leaps,
And straight to silence goes :
The sound has gone—clean gone—but where ?
Ah ! where indeed ?—who knows ?

See !—if vibrations grow too swift
They pass to—the Beyond.
To ope that door to Eye and Ear
Who has the magic wand ?

I would be as a reed to Love,
But am not tuned aright ;
Too rapid the vibrations are,
The notes have taken flight !

I meant to pipe a song for you,
But vain is such an aim :
My love has leapt to silence, dear,
At touch of your sweet Name.

But you have that enchanted rod
The unseen gates to move :
To you will silence yield the song,
And vocalise my love.

AUORE.

AN OCTAVE OF SONG.

First Morning.

THE new-waked spirit sometimes sighs
For Life Eternal in the skies :
Straightway this bright thought crowns the brow,—
“ Eternity is always Now.”

Second Morning.

Find me the sun above these clouds,
O, heart of mine !
Or take the clouds themselves as proof
The sun doth shine.

The loveliest Sign the sunshine gives
To mortal eyes,
Is wrought by it in falling rain
On cloudy skies.

How say, "the sun shines not to-day,"
 Whilst day is day ?
The daylight is but sunlight veiled
 In clouds of grey.

Live on the rays that filter through :
 For every one
That falls on thee, it came for thee
 Straight from the sun.

In shade or sunshine be content, •
 O, heart ! and know
Earth's atmosphere which makes the cloud
 Makes Light also.

Third Morning.

Awake !
The light of day I never yet have seen !
 Forth from its slumber let my Being break !
I know, I feel, I never yet have been
 Body and soul awake.

The sleep of Adam is not yet forgot.
 There is a sleepless life in us that fain
Would take us to the Life that slumbers not,
 Never to sleep again.

Fourth Morning.

What is the bugle-call to-day
That doth to us "Reveillez" say ?

Is it some great thing to be done ?
Some work fulfilled ? some joy forgone ?

Or is it that life comes to us
With no task made solicitous :

But with an open sheet addressed
For us to write what seems us best ?

That were indeed the harder task
For watchful life from us to ask.

But we accept the challenge bright,
On a clear page our Day to write.

The morning bugle-call that rings
To us the thought of upward things

May ring at sundown on a Day
That has harked forward on the way.

Fifth Morning.

What are the "debts"—O God—the which
 Forgiven we ask to be ?
 The touch of Thee that lives in us—
 That is our Debt to Thee.

The debtor's count grows day by day
 In all we hear and see :
 All that is meant by that word—"like"—
 This is our Debt to Thee.

The Birthright given in the Christ,
 Of which we hold the key :
 The Mystery of the Sons of God—
 These are our "Debts" to Thee.

Sixth Morning.

In the dim land of Sleep
 Where did I go last night ?
 Memory is there none
 Of what was said and done :—
 All has taken flight !

In that dark world of Dreams
We are but wanderers—lost !
Born in a world unknown :—
Sailing out,—alone,—
Drifting,—or tempest-tossed !

Ah ! in the world of Death,
What for the wandering soul ?
Falling asleep, as 'twere,
Drifts it to some Dream-sphere
Where it has no control ?

If our own Thought-world makes
That unto which we go,
Why does it claim us not
When sleep has freed our Thought ?
What is Dream's phantom-show ?

Well : we arise from sleep—
The dreams, they pass away !
Sleep, none the less, makes us strong,
We greet the Light with a song,
And we face the coming day.

See ! how bright is the Morn !
 Draw in its life-giving breath !
 Bright may that Morning be,—
 God !—when we wake to Thee,
 After the Dreams of Death !

Seventh Morning.

The earth to me is not the same it was
 In childhood's days of "splendour in the grass."

The sunset has a different tale to tell
 To that in youth I loved to hear so well.

The Dawn no more the message gives it had
 In wondrous summers when I was a lad.

Ah ! how the magic boyish memories come
 And look at me—and pass : for they are dumb !

Far-off—in more than years, with changes rife,—
 I view them as they were another life !

Even as I—who knows ?—may view some day,
 The hundred lives that led me on my way !

But no regret I feel,—no sense of pain,—
 No sighs for days that cannot come again.

Those sighs are past : I sighed them once, in truth ;
I sang my echo-song of Vanished Youth !

But Sunrise came !—a sun, not seen before !
And Earth grows young for ever in That Aurore !

Eighth Morning.

There's nothing great and nothing small ;
God is alike in each and all :
All things are lofty to the eye
That sees in all, Reality.

God's Kingdom is on earth begun :
Time and Eternity are one :
And Heaven is not some distant sphere :
It lies about us, Now and Here.

VERSES

WRITTEN FOR AN ADAPTATION OF DICKENS'S
"CHRISTMAS CAROL."

I.—*Chorus of Spirits.*

I.

AH ! will it last for ever,
The struggle and endeavour ?
Who will set thee free ?
The wail of wasted life,
Goal of a barren strife—
These things wait for thee !
Shadow and Illusion,
Phantom and Confusion,
All you love may be.
Flesh doth the soul conceal ;
Only That is Real
Which you cannot see.

II.

Life turns to decay,
All things pass away ;—
Where is Reality ?
Listen ! look ! 'Tis near.
He with ears shall hear,—
He, and only he !
Not in sight or sound,
Not in things around
• Mortals find the key.
Flesh doth the soul conceal :
Only that is Real
Which you cannot see.

2.—*A Christmas Song.*

I.

MANY our pleasures and many our pains,
Worries enough and to spare !
Days there are in each month when it rains,
Days, when the skies are fair ;
But very good things,—very, very good things—
• Oh, no ! they don't often appear !
Holidays many the round year brings,
But Christmas comes once a year.

So—

Songs we'll sing to it,
Belis we'll ring to it,
Joy we'll bring to it—
Once a year !

II.

Perhaps when winds are bitter-black,
And the ground is hard as a brick,
When water-pipes burst, and glasses crack,
And coals burn all too quick,
When bills a many there are to pay,
And nothing to pay them—O, dear !
We are almost sorry that Christmas Day
Should come even once a year !

Ah !—

Yea or nay for it,
Say what you may for it,
Oh ! we pay for it—
Once a year !

III.

But ah ! what matter the worry and chill
When we clasp the hands we love ?
We take the good and we take the ill,
Press forward, and look above.

For hearts grow warm when earth doth freeze,
 And stars i' the dark shine clear :
 So let us be glad—(all together, please !)—
 That Christmas comes once a year.

Ay !—

Comes with light for us,
 Makes life bright for us,
 Puts things right for us—
 Once a year !

3.—*A Carol.*

CHRISTMAS carols !—Christmas carols !—
 Still we sing them year by year ;
 Still the holy Christmas message,
 “ Peace on earth,” the nations hear.
 But we wait—in vain !—expectant
 Of that Advent in the skies ;
 For its kingdom is within us,
 And 'tis *there* that sun must rise.
 Christmas Day—the wondrous Birthday
 Of the soul's celestial Breath—
 Whilst it gives new life to this life
 Gives nativity to Death.

If its Truth were born within us
Life were Immortality,
And a song too great for singing
Would our Christmas carol be !

Not alone when snows are falling
Do the herald angels sing :
They are with us in the May-time
If our hearts are listening.
Summer, Winter, Seed-time, Harvest,
All alike are Christmas-time
Unto him who hears the Tidings
In each passing hour and chime.
Look above, and look within you,
Seek and find your Bethlehem :
For the Star the Wise Men followed
Shines for us as erst for them.
Every breath becomes a carol,
Every star-beam points the way,
And the message of the Christmas
Lives for all in every day !

LINES

WRITTEN AFTER READING A POEM BY THOMAS BAILEY
ALDRICH CALLED "VOICES AND VISIONS"—REGRET-
TING THE LOSS OF THE FAIRYLAND OF YOUTH.

^ In youth, beside the summer sea,
Voices and visions came to me.
Now one by one the visions fly,
Now one by one the voices die," &c., &c.

STILL in the common daily round
The visions shine, the voices sound.

Ah ! do not ever from me flee ;
Still to the end companion me.

Eyesight may dim and hearing fail,
Our Life may try to weave a veil

Between me and that shining sphere
That shone upon me once so clear,

But let me all these things defy
To dull the Spirit's ear and eye.

For Age—what is it? Time is naught
To him who holds the world of thought.

Away then, complaints of vain regret,
For youth gone by, and suns now set !

Away with fears that days may dawn
When those fair visions are withdrawn !

Those whom the gods love—so 'tis sung—
Always (I read it thus) die young !

Their youth, that is, lasts all their day :
Childhood for them fades not away ;

It only sinks within—apart—
To live for ever in the Heart.

Ah ! let me never lose the gleam
Of that true world men call a Dream !

Mine be the blame if sense grow gross,
If those fair visions suffer loss.

Let the loud world go on amain,
Toiling at what it counts as gain,

Laugh with a pitying smile at what
It seeth and it heareth not,

Gibe at the Truth it dubs "Ideal,"
And clutch Illusions it calls "Real" ;

But let the world be still to me
The same it was in Infancy !

The same—and better ! Fairyland
Brought living to my very hand,

And "heaven"—once far beyond the sky—
Part of to-day's reality !

• •

So, whilst the round years onward roll,
Till Death itself unloose the soul—

Ay,—seeing as I now do see—
For ever, mine may this prayer be—
"Voices and Visions, come to me !"

SUNSHINE.

As the flowers, though earth-rooted,
Take their colour from the sun :
So my life takes form and colour,
All from thee, my dearest one.

In the rose and in the lily,
In the violet, there lies
Beauty that is born in heaven,
Light drawn down from summer skies.

Thus the heart of every flower
Holds a sun-shaft, deep concealed :
But it throbs through all its being,
And in colour is revealed.

If my life gain any honour,
Give the honour where 'tis due :
For I hold you in my heart, dear,—
And the light comes shining through.

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